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SUBJECT: MONTENEGRO EAGER TO MOVE QUICKLY TOWARD MAP AND NATO

REF: STATE 83586

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: PM Djukanovic enthusiastically welcomed the USG initiative to focus the GOM on priority goals related to its NATO aspirations (reftel). The PM reiterated Montenegro's strong commitment to seeking membership in MAP in 2009 and membership in the Alliance in the longer term. He readily agreed to the Ambassador's proposal to establish regular bilateral consultations between the Embassy and the GOM over the coming months to review Montenegro's progress toward NATO. The PM said he is worried that some Allies might try to slow down Montenegro's MAP and membership bids by lumping it together in the enlargement process with Georgia, Ukraine, and/or Serbia.
END SUMMARY

¶2. (SBU) In a meeting with PM Djukanovic on 8/6, the Ambassador emphasized, inter alia, USG support for Montenegro's NATO aspirations and called on the PM to ensure positive momentum toward NATO membership in the coming months and beyond. The Ambassador presented the PM with reftel's priority goals, stressing that the goals are only illustrative priorities and that successful implementation of them would not guarantee USG support for MAP in 2009. The Ambassador proposed that the Embassy and GOM consult regularly over the coming months to review Montenegro's progress toward closer association with NATO.

¶3. (SBU) Stressing his firm commitment to Montenegro's eventual membership in NATO, the PM enthusiastically welcomed the USG initiative. He reiterated his Government's strong desire to earn an invitation to membership in MAP at the 2009 Summit and wholeheartedly agreed to the suggestion of regular consultations with the Embassy. He said that such consultations would help the GOM ensure an energetic pace of progress toward closer ties with the Alliance. After conferring with Foreign Minister Rocen (currently on leave), the GOM will work with the Embassy to establish the modalities for such consultations. He said he fully understood the Ambassador's message that the priority goals were not a "checklist" and that successful implementation of them would not guarantee USG support for MAP in 2009.

¶4. (SBU) The PM expressed deep apprehension that some Allies might seek to dramatically slow down Montenegro's progress toward NATO by grouping it together with Georgia and Ukraine -- or perhaps Serbia -- in the enlargement process. He strongly appealed for Montenegro to be judged on its own merits, arguing that issues related to Montenegro's NATO aspirations were highly dissimilar to Georgia's and Ukraine's (e.g., Russia's attitude). He also expressed skepticism that Serbia would be prepared any time in the foreseeable future to engage in a committed effort toward NATO membership.

15. (SBU) We also propose (more detail in septel) that the USG encourage NATO to set up an office in Podgorica to help accelerate the defense reform and overall enlargement process. The GOM strongly supports the idea of such an office and would be willing to provide office space and other support.

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